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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their April 16 news coverage on Taiwan's expected deregulation of currency exchange between the New Taiwan dollar and the Chinese yuan; on speculation over possible personnel arrangements for the new Ma Ying-jeou administration; on the aftermath of the Boao Forum for Asia and possible developments in cross-strait relations; and on a tire-breaking incident involving an Eva Air MD-90 airplane in Kaohsiung Tuesday. The pro-unification "United Daily News" front-paged an exclusive news story, which said the semi-official Hong Kong Trade Development Council is planning to establish an office in Taiwan, a major breakthrough for Taiwan-Hong Kong relations.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" continued to slash at vice president-elect Vincent Siew's attendance at the Boao Forum for Asia on Hainan Island (China) over the weekend. The article said Siew has been hexed with the "one-China curse," which was an insult for himself and for his country. A separate "Liberty Times" analysis said president-elect Ma is likely to include the "1992 consensus and one China with respective interpretations" in his inaugural speech, as a strategic guideline for Ma to deal with relations among Washington, Beijing and Taipei. End summary.

A) "Secrets That Cannot Be Told"

The "Free Talk" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] (4/16):

"In the wake of the meeting between [vice president-elect] Vincent Siew and [Chinese President] Hu Jintao at the Boao Forum, Ma's camp has been trying to jack up the so-called ice-breaking consensus [across the Taiwan Strait] and the 16-word statement [Siew delivered to Hu]. In fact, however, if one looks more deeply into the matter, one will see that it is actually the ghost of the 'one-China principle' that has been dictating everything behind the scenes. Siew has been hexed with the 'one China curse,' and yet he appeared to be quite pleased with himself. There is nothing more insulting to oneself and one's country!

"Judging from the standards of China's treatment, the seating arrangement at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum, the capacity in which Siew was acting when Hu received him, and the conclusions reached at the roundtable meetings, one could easily tell that the 'one-China principle,' by which Beijing sees Taiwan as part of China, intangibly threaded together the entire forum. ... This time, China 'upgraded' Siew to sit in the front row with other VIPs, together with the first Chief Executives of Hong Kong and Macau Special Administrative Regions. The 'one-China principle' was visibly present without having to say it out loud. How many other secrets are there that cannot be told?"

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B) "Consensus on the One-China with Respective Interpretations?
Ma's Remarks Remain to Be Tested"

Washington correspondent Nadia Tsao commented in an analysis in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] (4/16):

"President-elect Ma Ying-jeou said in a recent press conference that the United States, China and Taiwan's KMT have all accepted the '1992 consensus and one China with respective interpretations.' It remains to be seen whether Ma's remarks can stand up to a test. ... White House National Security Council Asian Director Dennis Wilder said during a briefing in August 2007 that 'the Republic of China is an issue undecided, and it has been left undecided for many, many years.' The KMT believed then that Wilder's statement foreshadowed 'one China with respective interpretations.' Given current developments, Ma is very likely to follow Chen Shui-bian's example in 2000, in which he announced the 'Four Nos and one Without' pledge, and formally include the 1992 consensus and 'one China with respective interpretations' in his inaugural speech, as a strategic guideline for dealing with relations among Washington, Beijing and Taipei. ...

"But so far, only the English text of a Xinhua News Agency [press release] has included the '1992 consensus and one China with respective interpretations.' Officials who have engaged with the U.S. side have observed that Washington has yet to indicate its interest in publicly endorsing Beijing's [position] on one China with respective interpretations, as it is not sure whether Beijing's policy will change overnight. Given that China's Ministry of Commerce issued a press release prior to [vice president-elect] Vincent Siew's departure from the Boao Forum, which mentioned the 'one-China principle,' one cannot help but wonder whether Beijing really has reached a consensus on one China with respective interpretations.

"For Taiwan's part, if Ma fails to reach a consensus with the Green camp internally over the '1992 consensus and one China with

respective interpretations,' Taiwan will have a fragile base when it comes to negotiating with others. The talks across the Taiwan Strait are related to Taiwan's national status and security. For example, whether Beijing will stop the United States from selling weapons to Taiwan and thus reduce the security protection for the island after tensions across the Taiwan Strait are alleviated is a big question that the Green camp will have to ask of President Ma. ..."

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